



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO **MANAGER'S REPORT**

DATE ISSUED: March 13, 2002 REPORT NO. 02-051

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Docket of March 19, 2002

SUBJECT: West Arcade - Plan Amendment to the Balboa Park
Central Mesa Precise Plan

REFERENCE: Planning Commission Report No. P-01-239, dated November 21, 2001

SUMMARY

Issues: Should the City Council approve the plan amendment to the Balboa Park - Central Mesa Precise Plan for the proposed West Arcade Project and certify the Negative Declaration (ND) LDR No. 41-0536?

Manager's Recommendations: Approve the plan amendment to the Balboa Park - Central Mesa Precise Plan for the proposed West Arcade Project and certify the Negative Declaration.

Other Recommendations: The proposed plan amendment have been reviewed by the following advisory bodies on the dates shown, and their recommendations are noted.

January 3, 2001, the Historical Resources Board's Design Assistance Subcommittee endorsed the proposed plan amendment and project plans with the following issues to be studied:

1. The arcade presents an interesting design issue in its relationship to the existing slope, vegetation, and sculpture garden wrought iron fence. This needs to be studied in greater detail.
2. Landscape materials should also be carefully taken into consideration by using those that have a historical precedent with the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition.
3. The new arcade should line up with the entrance to the Alcazar Gardens.

4. The question of overall design of the arcade and its ornamentation with regards to compliance with US Secretary of Interior Standards is not an issue.

April 5, 2001, Planning Commission approved the initiation of the Plan Amendment with the following issues to be studied by staff:

1. To study the relationship of the west and east end of the proposed arcade in relationship to the existing buildings.
2. To study the relationship of the existing Museum of Art sculpture garden fence to the proposed location of the Arcade.

July 10, 2001, Balboa Park Committee recommended to approved the proposed plan amendment and project plans, vote 5-2-1.

July 11, 2001, Design Review Committee recommended to approved the proposed plan amendment and project plans, vote 5-3-0, with the following modifications:

1. The project is to return to the Design Review Committee for approval of the final landscape plan.
2. The plant material groupings should be revised to include plants that have more consistent form and habit.
3. The texture of the stucco should match the House of Charm rather than the East Arcade.

October 18, 2001, Park and Recreation Board recommended to approve the proposed plan amendment and project plans, vote 7-1-0.

November 29, 2001, Historical Resources Board recommended to certify the environmental negative declaration and recommend approval of the proposed plan amendment with the following minor language modification, vote 8-1-0:

Remove the word 're-construction' and add "West Arcade construction to be located where it was originally constructed in 1915, on the north side of the Prado."

On the proposed project plans, the Historic Resource Board (HRB) recommended that the large arch not be approved, and that the project return to the HRB to address landscaping, connection to the Museum of Man, and the central portion's relationship to a later potential reconstruction of the Science and Education Building.

December 6, 2001, Planning Commission recommended to the City Council that they approve staff's recommendations as amended and recommended by the Historical Resources Board (HRB'S letter dated December 5, 2001), along with the deletion of the recommendation to provide an arch opening through the arcade for visibility and fire access to the Globe Theater (Page 286 of the 1992 Precise Plan) .

Fiscal Impact: None with this action.

Environmental Impact: The City of San Diego, as lead agency under CEQA, has issued a Negative Declaration, LDR No. 41-0536, date of final report 11-15-01

BACKGROUND

The West Arcade Project is the last section of the Prado arcades to be constructed, located on the northwest side of El Prado/Laurel Street and adjacent to the Museum of Art sculpture garden, see attachment #1. The Committee of 100, a non-profit organization formed in 1967 to save the remnants of the Spanish Colonial architecture in the park has taken on the rebuilding of the western arcades as one of their main goals. In 1990 the Committee of 100 appeared before all required committees and the national Park Service to approve the architectural plans for the rebuilding of the arcades. There would be two sections; the east arcade from the Plaza de Panama to the Lily Pond and the west arcade from the Plaza de Panama to the Museum of Man. It was determined that the east section would be built first followed by the west section as soon as possible. The east arcade was designed and built in 1992 from money totally raised by the Committee of 100. This year the Committee of 100 is fund-raising for the design and construction of the west arcade

The original west arcade was built as part of the Science and Education building during the 1915 Pan Pacific Exposition. Visitors to the Exposition entered the Prado area by waking east across the Cabrillo bridge taking in the view of the California Tower, the primary vertical focal point of the park. A sense of arrival was experienced when entering the formal, enclosed California Plaza which served as an outdoor foyer to the Museum of Man. Exiting the California plaza, two rows of arcades on either side of the main pedestrian promenade provided a sense of continuity between the Science and Education Building on the west side (now the Old Globe entry and Museum of Art Sculpture Garden) and the open feeling of Montezuma Garden (now the Alcazar Garden) on the right. The arcades served as transitional ties between one building style to another, and also provided sheltered circulation links from the California Plaza to Plaza de Panama. Leaving the enclosed arcades the visitor entered the sunny Plaza de Panama, which was designed as the central open space for the Exposition.

The horticulture of the 1915 Exposition was exotic, lush and idyllic. These qualities were made tangible by the enormous variety and quantity of exotic species that would grow in San Diego.

Historical pictures of the arcade and the Science and Education Building show lush planting of trees, flowering shrubs and vines.

In the 1960's the Science and Education Building and the attached west arcade of the original 1915 Exposition were demolished to make way for the new west wing of the Museum of Art. This demolition of the original building drastically altered the architectural and spatial character of the area. The new addition introduced a Modern Style architectural motif into the El Prado area without the benefit of an evaluation of the modern forms in the context of the historical area, as the US Secretary of Interior Standards would require now. In 1971 the City's Historical Sites Board designated the Balboa park Exposition area as City of San Diego Historical Site Number 1. Subsequently the area was submitted to the National Parks Service for incorporation into the national Landmark List, which occurred in 1974. At the same time, the City council adopted a new policy for the El Prado area designating the Spanish Colonial theme as mandatory throughout the 1915 Exposition area.

Today, the Central Mesa Precise Plan for Balboa Park, adopted in 1992, shows the east arcade to be rebuilt, connecting the Lily Pond to the Plaza de Panama Plaza. The west arcade is not shown in the Precise Plan and is currently being submitted to the City as a proposed plan amendment.

DISCUSSION

Project Description

The proposed plan amendments, see attachment #2, to the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan will allow for the West Arcade to be built in the Prado area of the park. Page 284, the Prado Streetscape, of the Precise Plan is being modified to graphically show the location of the West Arcade and identify that it will be constructed in the original footprint of the 1915 arcade. Page 286, Old Globe Plaza, is being modified to graphically show the location of the west end of the West Arcade and how it relates to the Old Globe Plaza. Page 290, Plaza de Panama Plan, is being modified to show graphically the location of the east end of the West Arcade and how it relates to the Plaza.

The West Arcade will be a partial reconstruction of the original arcade, based on the original building plans found at the San Diego central library. The west end will be considered a new addition due to the Fire Department requirement for an enlarged arch for fire access to the Old Globe. Building materials and colors will be selected based on the original architecture plans. The proposed landscaping adjacent to the West Arcade will incorporate the original landscape design by maintaining the lawn area and providing a shrub bed adjacent to the arcade. Plant material used in the original landscape will be incorporated into the new design. Coprosma shrubs will be used along the railings and Bignonia and Bougainvillea vines will be planted along the walls of the arcade for color and form.

Issues Studied

In order to expedite the project plans for the Committee of 100 and to make an environmental

determination if a Site Development Permit would be required, the project plans were presented to the advisory bodies at the same time the proposed plan amendments were presented. During the presentation several advisory bodies asked for modifications, the following is a summary of the issues and how they were resolved:

The Historical Resources Board's Design Assistance Subcommittee (HRBDAS) requested that the West Arcade location be studied in relationship to the existing Museum of Art Sculpture Garden, that the Arcade should line up with the Alcazar Garden entrance and that the landscape materials should have historical precedent. When the original architectural plans were found at the City Library and the Committee of 100 agreed to rebuild the original 1915 arcade, the issue of the Sculpture Garden and the entrance to the Alcazar Garden were no longer an issue. The proposed landscape for the West Arcade will incorporate the historic design and plant materials.

The Planning Commission, at the time of plan amendment initiation, asked staff to study the west and east end of the arcade in relationship to the existing buildings and to study the relationship to the existing Museum of Art Sculpture Garden. Both of these items were resolved when the decision was made to reconstruct the original 1915 arcade. The only deviation made to the original design was the west end of the West Arcade. The west end will feature a large arch, that will allow the fire department access to the Old Globe Theater.

The Design Review Committee for the Park and Recreation Board requested that the final landscape plan come back to the committee at a latter date and that the stucco should match the House of Charm. Both of these items were agreed to and will be provided during the construction document phase.

The Historical Resources Board asked the Committee of 100 and their architect to re-look at the proposed design with the original architectural plans that were presented at the meeting by a representative from Save Our Heritage Organization (SOHO). A meeting in December 2001 was held at the site with SOHO, the Committee of 100, the Fire Department, Michael Crowe from the National Park Service and Park and Recreation staff. At this meeting the proposed design and the original architectural plans were reviewed and discussed. The Committee of 100 stated at the meeting that they had originally considered reconstructing the arcade per the original design but due to the Fire Department requirements for a large arch at the west end they voted to design an arcade that would be based on emphasizing the large arch at the west end. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Committee of 100 agreed to reconstruct the original arcade per the original architectural plans, with the exception of the west end. The west end of the arcade will accommodate a large arch to meet the fire department's requirement for fire access to the Old Globe Theater. The large arch will feature very little architectural detail to meet the requirements of the U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards for Historic Properties. This revised plan for the West Arcade, see attachment #3, was presented to SOHO and received an endorsement. The Historical Resources Board approved the new architectural plan at the January 2002 Board meeting and stated that the proposed West Arcade does meet the U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards for Historic Properties and that a Site Development Permit would not be required.

The Planning Commission voted to approve the Plan Amendment language with the request to implement the Historical Resources recommendations along with the deletion of the recommendation to provide an arch opening through the arcade for visibility and fire access to the Globe Theater, page 286 of the Precise Plan. The plan amendment language has been revised to reflect the wording requested by the Historical Resources Board and the Planning Commission. Although the language about a large arch opening to the Old Globe Theater has been removed from the plan amendments, the large arch will be part of the final project plans. The large arch is a requirement from the Fire Department and the Historical Resources Board has voted to recommend approval of it based on the redesign of the arch, see attachment #3.

Conclusion

The proposed plan amendments to the Central Mesa Precise Plan would allow the construction of the West Arcade within Balboa Park and implement the historical goals of the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan. The Committee of 100's vision to reconstruct the West Arcade will provide the City with the final link to the past and the West Arcade is intended to enhance the spirit of the Prado and Balboa Park. It will be a gift from the Committee of 100 to the City of San Diego.

ALTERNATIVE

Approve with modifications the proposed Plan Amendment to the Balboa Park - Central Mesa Precise Plan for the proposed West Arcade Project and Certify the Environmental Negative Declaration.

Respectfully submitted,

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Bruce Herring
Deputy City Manager

VAN WANSEELE/RS

Note: The attachments are not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

Attachments: 1. Project Location Map
2. Proposed Plan Amendments
3. Proposed Project Elevation